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AB Study

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IC 75-4501
25 November 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: An Overview of NSCIC, the NSCIC Working Group, and Other Consumer Contacts

1. NSCIC was formed in direct response to the November 1971 Presidential letter to the DCI, which stressed, among other points, that "more effective review of intelligence product quality and policy must be provided to the DCI, especially by high-level consumers of substantive national intelligence." In that spirit NSCIC convened its first meeting in December 1971 and formed a subordinate Working Group to staff out these worthy objectives.

2. The NSCIC Working Group has met 15 times since then, and a review of the minutes of these meetings shows that the Intelligence Community has not shirked its duty, in terms of suggesting topics of interest, staffing them out, and recommending ways of improvement. Indeed the Community in the person of the DCI pointed out at the initial NSCIC meeting that this was the first time the Intelligence Community had ever had any formal means of receiving the views of its principal consumers on the intelligence product. Moreover, the initiative came from the Community to reorganize the Working Group to more nearly reflect the views of the consumers--this in 1974--and also from the D/DCI/IC to transfer the chairmanship of the Working Group from himself to General Scowcroft of the NSC Staff--again better to reflect consumer views.

3. The problem is that meanwhile the voice of the high level consumers has faded away. At the first NSCIC meeting Dr. Kissinger opined that this group of senior intelligence officials should meet "at fairly lengthy intervals"; but he also went on to recommend that NSCIC then meet within two weeks, so that the members could formulate a proper list of needs, and thereafter every two months. As it turned out, NSCIC has only met one other time, in October 1974 when it approved the reconstitution of its Working Group. Repeatedly the NSCIC Working Group--more specifically, the Intelligence Community representation on it--has prepared relevant studies for NSCIC, only to have these go to waste when NSCIC failed to convene. In effect, the Working Group has become the highest collective voice of the consumers.

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4. As I see it, there are two options for dealing with this situation. One is to change nothing. That is a more attractive option than it might at first appear. So long as the high level consumers continue to remain passive in the process of product review, they really cannot blame the Intelligence Community for indifference to their needs. Moreover the NSCIC Working Group, in its reconstituted form, i.e., with a consumer as chairman and with subordinate committees, now has the capability to address specific, substantive topics to a degree probably not achievable at a higher level. Also, the Community's position in this body is about right, which is to say it has limits to it; the Community is not doing all the consumers' staff work.

5. But the Working Group is not as effective as it should be, and may wither on the vine unless it gets guidance periodically from a higher level. The second option, then, is to combine NSCIC with PFIAB. Their functions overlap now, and of the two groups PFIAB appears the more energetic. If the two were made one then the NSCIC Working Group could be expanded in size to reflect the composition of the new higher body.

6. All of the foregoing can be documented at (tedious) length from PRD's files on NSCIC and the Working Group, but this is probably enough by way of an "impressionistic" appraisal. [REDACTED] has 25X1A9a contributed the next paragraph on matters generally outside the NSCIC--NSCIC Working Group framework.

7. In addition to our NSCIC Working Group account, PRD establishes contacts with consumers during the course of our post-mortem (and other) investigations. The preparation of the Middle East (October 73 War) Post Mortem and the Cyprus Post Mortem, for example, involved PRD interviews with a variety of consumers in DOD, the Department of State, and the NSC Staff. We have not sought direct interviews with top people but have, when appropriate, talked to those who were familiar with the views of very senior officials. We have also, of course, elicited comments from working and middle-level consumers.

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